



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

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CONSUMERS URGED NOT TO PURCHASE ILLEGAL CHEESE *Health Hazards of "Bathtub" Cheese Cited*

County health officials are warning consumers not to buy illegal cheese and raw milk products that are being sold on the street and door-to-door in San Diego County.

The illegal cheese, sometimes called "Bathtub" cheese because it is often made in bathtubs, homemade wooden vats and rusted cheese molds, poses a health threat to California consumers because unlicensed manufacturers frequently use raw, unpasteurized milk that can encourage the growth of harmful bacteria. In addition, containers used to make the cheese are commonly stored in barns or garages lacking adequate pest control and sanitation.

"We have found these illegal cheeses being sold from the back of cars or trucks, at swap meets and from door-to-door salespeople," said Gary Erbeck, director of the County Environmental Health department.

"There can be serious health consequences if unpasteurized cheese is consumed," said Dr. Michele Ginsberg, Chief of Epidemiology, County Health and Human Services Agency. "Those health risks include contracting salmonella and listeria, which can cause abdominal cramping, nausea, diarrhea, muscle aches and fever. Pregnant women infected with listeria may transmit the infection to their fetus resulting in stillborn, early labor or meningitis in the newborn infant."

If you have eaten cheese that you think may have been unpasteurized and are suffering from the above symptoms, immediately contact your physician.

In California, it is a criminal offense to manufacture and sell cheese from an unlicensed facility. Wholesome cheeses produced by licensed manufacturers are available in retail stores and authenticated by specific labeling requirements. To report a complaint about a food vendor contact the Department of Environmental Health at (619) 338-2283.

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